

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Park and Recreation Department
Conference Room, 11th Floor, City Hall
Monday, April 26 2004
3:30 p.m.**

Present: Bob Aldrich, June Bailey, Dennis Brunner, Glen Dey, Bobbie Harris

Absent: Colleen Craig, Janet Miller

Also Present: Sharon Fearey - City Councilwoman; Buff Farrow - Friends of Riverside Tennis Center; Kathy Dittmer and M.S. Mitchell - Riverside Citizens Association; Dennis Schoenebeck - YMCA; and Doug Kupper and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Bailey called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

1. **Discussion of Indoor Tennis Facility at Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center**. President Bailey asked if anyone from the public wanted to speak. The audience declined comment at that time pending board discussion.

Bobbie Harris asked if South Riverside Park was parkland or City land? Director Kupper explained that the area was acquired before there was a Board of Park Commissioners, around 1904, so it was deeded to the City. She clarified that the Park Board's position on this issue was advisory to the City Council. Director Kupper indicated that the Park Board was advisory to the City Council on all issues.

Glen Dey asked if staff had a map of the proposed indoor tennis facility showing how and where it would be located at the park site. He also asked about the status of the outdoor courts at the complex. Director Kupper responded that the building would be oriented northeast to southwest and located at the site of four of the older outdoor courts at the east end of the parking lot. In addition, he said the racquetball and handball courts at the center would also be removed. He said the remaining ten outdoor courts would stay.

Bob Aldrich asked several questions relative to the 50% city/private fund match and timing of the venture. Director Kupper stated that the City has allocated \$2.5 million in the 2005 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to the project. He explained that once the Request for Proposed (RFP) is sent out, responded to by various organizations, and the bid awarded, a project timeline would be established. Bob Aldrich asked if staff could provide any information on the pros and cons of forming a partnership with a profit versus a not-for-profit organization.

Dennis Brunner if there are any architectural plans for the complex. Director Kupper commented that in 2001 the City contracted with an architectural firm to provide several plan concepts with cost estimates for construction of the facility. Dennis Brunner clarified that the \$3.5 million cost estimate for construction of the facility was back in 2001. Staff said that was correct.

President Bailey asked about the current RFP. Director Kupper commented that it was like the 2001 version, but not the same. He said the RFP furnished to board members was the 2001 version, which was a public document; however, he could not provide the current RFP until it had been released for bid. She asked about the possibility of establishing an enterprise fund for the tennis center, similar to the golf enterprise fund. Director Kupper stated that establishment of an enterprise fund could be an option; however, if the indoor tennis center remained a City operation, it would have to show a profit immediately to pay off bonding for construction of the facility and fund operating and maintenance expenses. He said there has also been discussion of establishing an endowment for the center so all socio economic groups can participate.

President Bailey asked about the status of the \$2.5 million in the CIP if the indoor tennis center project did not happen. Director Kupper explained that the CIP is subject to review and revision by the City Council at any time, but that the \$2.5 million was currently earmarked for the indoor tennis center project. She asked if the Park and Recreation Department's budget could support maintenance of the facility or any other part of the program. Director Kupper stated that how the proposed partnership was configured would depend on the responses received to the RFP. He said numerous scenarios were possible such as the City maintaining the facility, etc. President Bailey asked what the department currently spent on property maintenance at the tennis center. Director Kupper commented that he did not have those figures; however, the department posted a 61% cost recovery at the site.

Bobbie Harris commented that comparing an indoor facility to an outdoor facility was like comparing apples to oranges. Board members agreed. There was general discussion concerning various expenses associated with an indoor facility including electricity, and heating and air conditioning.

Bob Aldrich asked about hours of operation and if there were any projections on the amount of activity that was expected at the center. Director Kupper stated that most City facilities close at 10:00 p.m. He said it was reasonable to assume that the facility would be used all year round and mentioned that the location of the center in the core area was accessible to the entire community, provided fees were not prohibitive.

Bobbie Harris asked about developing an operating budget as part of the proposal. Director Kupper explained that there were a number of different variables possible such as a 50/50 or 25/75 split between the City and a partner. She asked if the Park Board could specifically recommend that the RFP for the partnership be with a not-for-profit organization only. She commented that the tennis center location was a prime piece of property. Dennis Brunner asked how the City would monitor the fees that are charged at the facility to make sure that they are affordable. Director Kupper said it would depend on how the contract was negotiated. He said the City could require that they be allowed to review the fees. He said with this type of investment, the contract is usually between 15-30 years in length in order to give the organization time to recover the cost they invested in construction of the facility. Dennis Brunner stated that it would defeat the vision for the facility if all individuals who wanted to play tennis there couldn't because of the cost.

President Bailey opened up the discussion for public comment. The following individuals spoke on the issue:

- Buff Farrow – Friends of Riverside Tennis Center (FRTC) – commented that over 85% of Wichita residents don't belong to a private sports club. He said an indoor tennis facility at Riverside would be for the entire community, not just Riverside residents. He said it would be a public

facility where all citizens would pay reasonable fees to play tennis year-round. He said he felt it would be a conflict of interest for a for-profit organization to run a community program. In addition, he said he was also concerned about using public parkland for commercial development. He said a for-profit organization would also have a limited ability to obtain grants or manage endowment funds. He said the City has spent funds improving tennis courts throughout the City, which courts he did not feel were utilized that much. He said a not-for-profit organization could provide real grass roots programming for all citizens, managed by an autonomous board, for the long-term benefit of the entire community.

Responding to a question, Mr. Farrow stated that the FRTC envisioned 6 indoor courts and 10 outdoor courts at the center. He added that they were also interested in hosting a variety of high school, college, semi-regional and regional tournaments. He stated that at least 12 outdoor courts would be needed to host national tournaments. He concluded by stating that he is currently a member of the United State Tennis Association Board.

Bobbie Harris asked if the FRTC was interested in partnering with another not-for-profit group. June Bailey asked if the FRTC had their 501©(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service. Mr. Farrow stated that they would be interested in a partnership and added that they currently did not have 501©(3) status. Director Kupper referred to the GreenWay Alliance and suggested that Mr. Farrow contact them.

- Kathy Dittmer – President, Riverside Citizens Association – stated that anything that will bring the community into the Riverside Park system is a good thing. She mentioned school outreach and other programs. She said this could be an opportunity for the entire community to enjoy tennis. Responding to a question regarding for-profit versus not-for-profit, she commented that the RCA has not discussed the tennis center for some time; however, the RCA was scheduled to meet next week. She mentioned that it might be a conflict of interest to have a business located in a public park.
- Dennis Schoenebeck – YMCA – spoke about making the facility accessible to as many children as possible. He said the YMCA has over 20,000 kids on scholarships and added that they would be willing to provide transportation in order to introduce the game of tennis to children.
- M.S. Mitchell – Riverside Citizens Association – commented that he has played on the tennis courts at Riverside since the 1960's. He said he has seen the center go from being run down to newly renovated. He said it is unfortunate that past pros could not make enough income during the summer months to make their contract financially worthwhile. He said he would do anything he could to convince the board and City to provide this opportunity to learn the sport of tennis to all citizens and, especially children.

Bob Aldrich suggested that the City get more involved in partnering with the YMCA. He said he did not see any way that a partnership with a for-profit organization could benefit the City, not on parkland. He suggested that the board recommend that the City partner with a not-for-profit organization only.

President Bailey said she feels the same way, especially after all the renovations to the Riverside Park System. She also mentioned that from a practical standpoint, a not-for-profit would have the ability to form partnerships with other not-for-profit groups. She also mentioned the need for anyone

responding to the RFP to supply a business plan and fee schedule to support the organization's ability to maintain the facility and run the program.

On motion by Bailey, second by Brunner, IT WAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to recommend that the City Council send the RFP to not-for-profit organizations only and that a business plan be required as part of the process.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

June Bailey, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk
Recording Secretary